

Administrative Policy

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# Abraham Lincoln's Administrative Problems

## Administrative Policy

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the  
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THE POLICY OF THE ADMINISTRATION. A  
Washington despatch to the New York Times  
says:

It is evident here that the policy of the Administration is rapidly crystalizing. The power of the government is to be tested, or rather the will of the people to sustain the laws and enforce unity. The President has come slowly up to realize the necessity of decisive and vigorous action, and the revenue laws are to be enforced in Louisiana as in New York, if the army and navy at the command of the government can do it. I am confident that in less than a week every port of importance, south of Charleston, which has inland communication, will be blockaded. It is for this purpose that vessels of war are being fitted for sea, and not for transport, as was supposed. Merchant vessels will be chartered for transport service.

Suddenly all our army officers that were quartered in this vicinity are missing and the fact is ascertained that they have left under sealed orders to be opened at sea. The distracted wives leak out this latter fact.

The Gulf squadron is to be commanded by Capt. Stringham. The reasons for the increase of the naval force in that quarter are conjectural. The intense caution which characterizes the Administration on this, as well as other military subjects, occasions many warlike rumors. The government seems to have come to the determination, in the language of a cabinet officer, to be known only by its acts.

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## **EVENING TRANSCRIPT.**

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**THURSDAY EVENING, NOV. 7, 1861.**

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### **SECOND EDITION.**

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**CONFIDENCE IN THE ADMINISTRATION.** We have had, within a day or two, the assurance of the President that the war will be prosecuted vigorously during the fall and winter, and the assurance of Gen. McClellan that the war cannot be long, though it may be desperate. Both of these statements point to early action; and the advices from Washington are that the report that the army is going into winter quarters is false. Meanwhile common sense dictates that it is wrong to join in any clamor for an onward movement, before the plan and preparation for such a movement have been thoroughly matured.

The Commander-in-Chief, in his pregnant Philadelphia letter, asks of his countrymen "patience, forbearance and confidence." Difficult as is the exercise of these virtues, he will doubtless command them, as his letter also breathes energy and hope. Indeed, the fits of impatience which have, now and then, been manifested by the press and the people, have been caused by the fear that, in the administration of the Government, the will as well as the energy was wanting\* to push the war vigorously. Washington is full of representative politicians, each ravenous to have the contest conducted on principles agreeable to his section, or his interest, or his crotchets. The mischievous activity of these has done more injury than the necessary inaction of our generals, for the worst sort of feebleness is that in which energy is paralyzed by intrigue. We are glad to learn that hereafter a definite and intelligent plan will be rigorously followed out, and that the operation of these malign influences has been permanently weakened. Bygones may be bygones, if unity, system, energy, are now dominant in the Cabinet.

It is a great mistake, however, to suppose that the honest criticism of independent and loyal journals will injure the cause of the nation. The man of property, in subscribing to the Loan, feels confident of its security as an investment as long as the disbursements of the public money are jealously watched. The volunteer goes willingly to the war when he knows that every fraud of every cheating contractor will be relentlessly exposed. The people are willing to give money and men for the primary object of the contest, but they demand that both money and men shall be used with honesty and sagacity. They are willing to exercise patience, when patience is politic. They are willing to forbear even to that extremest point where forbearance ceases to be a virtue, if forbearance will aid the work they are sworn to perform. And as for confidence, they have never ceased to repose it in Lincoln and McClellan.

R. March 17  
Aug 11 1862

THE PRESIDENT AND HIS AIMS. The Wash-  
ington correspondent of the New York Commer-  
cial Advertiser says that "those who sup-  
pose that the President of the United States, with  
millions of strong and patriotic people at his  
back, is cowering and crouching before a few  
hundred thousand slaveholders in the border  
States, do not know the man. He is taking his  
own time and his own way, as he has a right  
to do, for on him rests the sole responsibility.  
He understands the people perfectly. It will not  
be long ere the people understand him. His plans  
are all matured, far ahead. His policy is marked,  
and designed for a great future. His principal  
anxiety is NOT TO DIVIDE THE NORTH. He is  
fully up to the advancing public sentiment of the  
age, and will prove himself the man for the hour.  
Prepare the people for movements in the broad  
area of freedom, as grand as those made by the  
Emperor of Russia. The Republic will be saved  
on the basis of universal liberty."

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*Boston Herald*  
**EVENING TRANSCRIPT.**

**THURSDAY EVENING, JAN. 20, 1865.**

**PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S POLICY AND DUTY.**

We have just read in one of the opposition papers, whose tone has, since the election, been on the whole patriotic, a suggestion amounting to advice and indicating a proposed course of action; that now is the exact and propitious time for President Lincoln to show "magnanimity" towards the rebel leaders. As a counterbalance to this suggestion of one party, we meet with frequent expressions of fear in some of the papers in warmest sympathy with the administration lest the current rumors of peace negotiations may foreshadow some weakness of the President in the direction of a relaxed severity of judgment towards these same leaders. Precisely what is meant by "magnanimity" in this view we can only infer from the general tone of the more moderate portion of the opposition party. Probably the suggestion is intended to cover more or less of what is implied in one or in both of the two following propositions: First, that for the sake of convenience, or as a salvo to the pride of the rebels, Mr. Lincoln should waive his avowed purpose of ignoring the existence of any leaders of the rebellion civil or military, and should "recognize them" to the extent of making them the official channel of mediation. Second, that those leaders should be included with their dupes and victims in the general amnesty which is to follow the laying down of arms.

These intimations of what one party would like to have the President do, as an exhibition of his "magnanimity," correspond to what the idle timidity of some among us prompts them to fear that he may be induced to do, even at the sacrifice of his own consistency, the repudiation of his own promise, and the humiliation of the high and resolute pride which glows at the heart of the thoroughly loyal part of the people.

We have no authority to speak for Mr. Lincoln under what some are venturing now to represent as a dilemma, between the horns of which he is supposed to be struggling. The unwavering confidence in him which his whole noble and sturdy course has justified us in cherishing, satisfies us alike on both these points, that true magnanimity does not require of him any such humiliating concession as is indicated, and that no one need fear that he will trifle with the highest resolve of the patriotism of this people, viz.: that the rebel leaders shall be held accountable for all the woe and carnage and desolation of the war, and shall never again share in the honors and prosperity of our restored nationality.

The President may encounter infinite embarrassment and perplexity in circumstances now realized, and from others which are likely to arise in every stage of negotiatory or pacificatory measures with the people of the insurgent States. It might please the people of some of them in their conventions to try to break the fall of one or more of their beguiling demagogues, by selecting him or them to carry out the agency of mediation. Bold demands may be made on the President's "magnanimity," or subtle intrigues and manoeuvres may be tried to hamper a desirable and convenient measure for restoring the national authority by committing its execution, on the part of the returning rebels, to one of their most obnoxious and treacherous citizens; as if the blessing he was to bring would cover his own guilt. Indeed, no draft of the imagination is necessary for the sake of conjuring up the possible complications and difficulties through which alone we must expect the full and sure restoration of the national authority. They are obvious, real and exacting enough as they present themselves to a matter-of-fact mind. All the more, then, will they require to be met and dealt with by a few rigid and unyielding principles which have been certified, tested and proclaimed beforehand, which the President himself has avowed, and thus far consistently followed; which up to this point have been

triumphantly maintained, and which we believe may be and will be resolutely held to the end.

One of these principles is, that neither the President nor Congress shall in any way directly or indirectly recognize a central and representative authority among the rebels, civil or military, save only that of an officer in field or camp over his own command when he bids them to lay down their arms. A rebel Congress, a rebel President, representing a bogus Confederacy, are to us purely non-existent—imaginary, unreal, impossible things; we do not know them; of course we cannot regard them as necessary to or as available for any negotiation or compact. In that spurious Congress are men professing to represent States, which are as firmly and loyally in the Union as is any one of the whole sisterhood. Their bogus representatives in Richmond would not venture to show their faces among their constituents. It would be a stretch even of the absurdly exaggerated jocosity of our honored Chief Magistrate to suppose he could indulge himself in negotiation with such mediators.

## “THE WAR HAS ACTUALLY BEGUN”



BEFORE Lincoln's Cabinet had begun to understand that he was greater than any of them, Fort Sumter was fired on and its brave little garrison was forced to surrender, April 14th, 1861. This act roused the North to action. When the President called for seventy-five thousand men the response was prompt. Five days later, April 19th, the Sixth Regiment was mobbed and the first blood of the Civil War was shed in the streets of Baltimore. Leading men came from Baltimore to protest against troops crossing Maryland soil on their way to the national Capital. President Lincoln replied with one of his first characteristic speeches as President:

“We *must* have troops; and as they can neither crawl under Maryland, nor fly over it, they must *come across* it.”

Washington was in danger of attack any day and rumors were rife. Many people fled from the city and Mrs. Lincoln was urged to seek safety with her three boys. She stoutly replied:

“I am as safe as Mr. Lincoln, and I shall not leave him.”

The first battles were defeats for the North. The battle of Bull Run, so near the Capital, was a crushing blow and a great discouragement. President Lincoln had to call again and again for troops.

Two Confederate commissioners, Mason and Slidell, were on their way to England on the English steamship “Trent,” when Captain Wilkes captured them. The country was delirious with joy over this bold stroke, and members of the President's Cabinet even opposed returning the commissioners. But Lincoln saw that a vital principle was involved, for which the United States had gone into the War of 1812 with England. Lowell explained the case when he made his Hosea Biglow say:

“We give the critters back, John,  
‘Cause Abra’m thought ‘twas right;  
It warn’t your bullyin’ clack, John,  
Provokin’ us to fight.”

While his Cabinet members were insulting him by patronizing him, the newspapers, even of his own party, including the “New York Tribune,” were ridiculing him. Wendell Phillips and other abolitionists were sneering at him, and battle after battle was going against him. The South was calling him an ogre, a mulatto and a fiend incarnate. President Lincoln's faith and patience were put to a painful test. Besides, he had to dispose of his Secretary of War, Simon Cameron, for conduct which was certainly open to question. He believed Edwin M. Stanton was the best man for the responsible place, though Stanton had always grossly abused him. The other members of the Cabinet demurred, for Stanton was a very opinionated, disagreeable man, but the President, in the grandeur of his character, forgave and forgot Stanton's insults and allowed for his peculiar temperament as in the following story:

“We may have to treat Stanton,” the President went on, “as they are sometimes obliged to treat a minister I know out West. He gets wrought up to so high a pitch of excitement in his prayers and exhortations that they have to put bricks into his pockets to keep him down. We may have to serve Stanton the same way, but I guess we'll let him jump awhile first.”



Mrs. Mary Todd Lincoln

1910



# AT THE HELM OF STATE

## A FAMILIAR STORY CORRECTED



IMMEDIATELY after Lincoln's election, seven Southern States had called a convention and issued orders of secession, South Carolina leading, to the extent of publishing news from other States of the Union under the heading, "Foreign Intelligence." The first capital of the Confederate States of America was Montgomery, Alabama, and Jefferson Davis was elected their President. Members of Buchanan's Cabinet were doing all in their power to aid the South and destroy the National Government. President Lincoln looked on in helpless alarm. Observing Buchanan's weak and foolish admissions and inaction, he said to a friend, "Buchanan is giving the case away and I can't help it."

Almost the last thing he did was to take the journey across the country, fording swollen rivers, to visit his father's grave and say good-by to his dear old stepmother, who survived him. On February 11th, 1861, the day before his fifty-second birthday, he bade farewell to Springfield, making the following speech at the station:

"MY FRIENDS: No one not in my position can appreciate the sadness I feel at this parting. To this people I owe all that I am. Here I have lived more than a quarter of a century; here my children were born, and here one of them lies buried. I know not how soon I shall see you again. A duty devolves upon me which is, perhaps, greater than that which has devolved upon any other man since the days of Washington. He would never have succeeded except for the aid of Divine Providence, upon which he at all times relied. I feel that I cannot succeed without the same Divine aid which sustained him, and in the same Almighty Being I place my reliance for support; and I hope you, my friends, will pray that I may receive that Divine assistance, without which I cannot succeed, but with which success is certain. Again, I bid you all an affectionate farewell."

He made many speeches on his winding way to Washington. Perhaps the most important of these was in raising a flag over Independence Hall, Philadelphia, when he said he "would rather be assassinated at this spot" than surrender the principle of union and liberty for which the fathers had given their lives.

Being informed by two groups of friends, independently of each other, that there was a well-laid plot to murder him while passing through Baltimore, he left Harrisburg and went through Baltimore in the night, ing in Washington, to the surprise of the country, on the morning of the 23d of February.

The story so often told of the President-elect losing his valise containing his inaugural address is wrong in several particulars. Robert, Lincoln's eldest son, did really mislay the valise. It happened in Indianapolis, not in Harrisburg, and Mr. Lincoln did not put it in his valise and carry it the rest of the way himself, as is always published, but as soon as it was found, he turned to Robert, handed it back to him, and said, "Now, Bob, see if you can't take better care of it."

In keeping with the character of Abraham Lincoln to give his son another charge, Mr. Lincoln did not let Robert faithfully guard his precious charge the rest of the way.

Week before his inauguration the President-elect spent in conferring with members of his prospective Cabinet. Mr. Seward, after accepting the portfolio of Secretary of State, withdrew, but Mr. Lincoln urged him to retain it.

When President Buchanan escorted Mr. Lincoln to the Capitol to take the oath of office, the old President was bowed nearly double with age. This made Lincoln seem a giant in stature beside him. He was introduced by his old friend Baker, to whose aid he had come when the ceiling of the Capitol was falling, and who was now Senator from Oregon. Mr. Lincoln, "ancient enemy," Stephen A. Douglas, held his hat while he was delivering his inaugural address, which was offered to the South as an olive branch and was received like a gift.

It closed with the following conciliatory message:

"I am loath to close. We are not enemies but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."



Delivering the Inaugural

1910





